

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY SANA
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANA 237

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR
SUBJECT: FRENCH UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE VISITS SANA TO DISCUSS
DJIBOUTI EVOLUTION.

SUMMARY: FRENCH SEEK YARG AID IN MOVING DJIBOUTI TO SECURE INDEPENDEN
CE.
END SUMMARY.

1. DURING JANUARY 15 CONVERSATION, MINISTER OF STATE AHMAD ABDU SAID
INFORMED AMBASSADOR THAT THE RECENT VISIT TO SANA OF FRENCH UNDER
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
TETANGER (PHONETIC SPELLING) WAS FOR THE PURPOSE
OF DISCUSSING THE CURRENT SITATUION IN DJIBOUTI AND OBTAINING THE
YARG IVEWS ON THE FUTUE OF THAT FRENCH COLONIAL TERRITORY. SAID
STATED THAT AS IN THE PAST THE FRENCH MINISTER WAS TOLD THAT YEMEN
FAVORS INDPENDENCE FOR THE TERRITORY BUT HOPES THAT THE FRENCH WILL
BE ASKED TO REMAIN AFTER INDEPENDENCE. SAID NOTED THAT A FRENCH MILIT
ARY
PRESENCE WOULD BE THE BEST GUARANTEE FOR THE YEMENI COMMUNITY THERE W
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IS ALREADY, ACCORDING TO HIM, BEGINNING TO FEEL THREATENED BY AN
UNPERDICTABLE POST INDEPENDENCE SITUATION.

2. ON JANUARY 16, FRENCH CHARGE DENIAUD IN SANA TOLD DCM THAT
TETANGER VISIT
HAD ELICITED FROM FOREIGN MINISTER AL-ASNAJ
AN OFFER TO PRESS SOMALIS TO ACCEPT

AN INDEPENDENT DJIBOUTI WITH RESIDUAL FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE. DENIAUD DID NOT THINK THE YEMENIS BY THEMSELVES WOULD HAVE MUCH INFLUENCE BUT HE SAID THAT YEMENI RELATIONS WITH THE SOMALIS APPEARED TO BE GOOD AND MOREOVER THAT THE SOMALIS SEEMED TO HAVE SOFTENED THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE INDEPENDENT TFAI AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF ALI AREG. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, PROMPTINGS FROM AN INTERESTED STATE LIKE YEMEN ON SOMALIA DIRECTLY COULD BE OF BENEFIT, PARTICULARLY IF YEMENIS FOLLOWED UP WITH DEMARCHES WITHIN ARAB LEAGUE.

3. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, DENIAUD SAID MOTIVE FOR AL-AASNAJ HELP HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH LARGE YEMENI COMMUNITY IN DJIBOUTI. AL-ASNAJ IS SIMPLY CONCERNED TO SEE TFAI NOT RPT NOT BECOME CAUSE FOR WAR BETWEEN SOMALIA AND EHTIOPIA. AL-ASNAJ APPARENTLY BELIEVES WAR WOULD BENEFIT LEFTISTS AND COMMUNIST ELEMENTS NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME.

4. DENIAUD NOTED THAT TETANGER BROUGHT AL-ASNAJ A FORMAL INVITATION TO VISIT PARIS. HE EXPECTED THAT THE VISIT WOULD TAKE PLACE IN MARCH OR APRIL BUT NO DATE HAD BEEN SENT. FRENCH CHARGE NOTED THAT VISIT WOULD BALANCE ONE BY PDRY FORMIN MUTIH AND WOULD PUT OFF YEMENI REQUEST EARLIER THIS YEAR FOR HAMDI VISIT TO PARIS. NEVERTHELESS, SAID CHARGE, THE BASIC REASON FOR VISIT IS TO CULTIVATE ANY DIPLOMATIC RESOURCE INBAB EL MANDEB AREA WHICH MIGHT HELP FRENCH IN EXTRICATING THEMSELVES FROM DJIBOUTI.

5. DENIAUD SAID FRENCH WILL LEAVE MILITARY PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI
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IF (A) THEY ARE ASKED TO DO SO BY EMERGING GOVERNMENT THERE AND (B) SITUATION IS NOT CHAOTIC AND STRIFE-RIVEN. FRENCH WILL TAKE ONLY NOMINAL SYMBOLIC ROLE AS MILITARY GUARANTOR OF NEW STATE, IN OTHER WORDS, LARGELY BECAUSE THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT SEES NO RPT NO STRATEGIC MILITARY NEED FOR BASE IN DJIBOUTI.

COMMENT. DENIAUD SAYS HIS REMARKS ABOUT FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE REFLECTS HIS TALK WITH TETANGER, BUT IT IS CLEARLY BETTER TO GET SUCH IDEAS DIRECTLY RATHER THAN SECOND HAND. ALSO, WE ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT DENIAUD'S HOPE THAT SOME USEFUL DIPLOMATIC INFLUENCE CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR BY YEMENIS ON SOLAIS OR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ARAB LEAGUE. NEVERTHELESS, WE WILL LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITY TO ENCOURAGE AL-ASNAJ IN THIS EFFORT ON ASSUMPTION THAT WE SHOULD DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO BACKSTOP FRENCH IN TRYING TO AVERT A BLOODY AND PROFITLESS CONFLICT AFTER INDEPENDENCE IN DJIBOUTI. HOWEVEER, IF FRENCH AREN'T WILLING TO GUARANTEE THE NEW STATE IN FIRMER MILITARY SENSE, WE DOUBT DIPLOMACY CAN SUCCEED.

SCOTES

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